Greetings --

I am a professor of computer science at the University of Colorado at Boulder. I am a lifelong Unix user, but my professional life has been significantly affected by the Microsoft monopoly, and I would like to make a few points about the settlement.

Microsoft has a long history of business practices that intentionally and effectively tie its users' hands -- in ways that benefit Microsoft, and that perpetuate and extend its monopoly. Their business practices are predatory, and their design choices have made it difficult for anyone to use any kind of competing software or format. This is true from the system level (e.g., the netscape lockout) to the social/practice level -- for example, how hard it is to get a Microsoft email program to send email messages in anything but Microsoft-proprietary format.

This last example, which hits me many times every day, may seem petty, but it is really pernicious -- in the way that my history classes taught me that the anti-trust act is intended to fix. I get email from a non-computer-scientist colleague, complete with a Word attachment. I email back, asking for a lingua franca format like pdf or ascii. My correspondent can't figure out how to do the translation, eventually gets frustrated, and castigates me for not "getting with the program" and using Microsoft. Since I use computers professionally, doing so is not an option; moreover, I know enough to not succumb to that kind of pressure. Neither of those things is true for most people, and the pressure propagates the Microsoft monopoly.

Encouraging an entire community of users to use a single set of proprietary software is not only a matter of monopoly. It is also a matter of security. Microsoft's email programs, for example, not only force their naive users to send Microsoft-format attachments, but also make those users vulnerable, because the defaults are set up so incoming attachments are automatically ingested. Moreover, those programs are full of security holes. This combination causes dozens of virus attacks to propagate around the world every year. My colleagues' computers are routinely paralyzed during these events, but I have never -- NEVER -- been affected by a virus in my 20 years at MIT and Colorado.

It is well known in ecology that a diverse population is far more robust. The goal of Microsoft's direct and indirect pressure is a homogeneous population of computer users running Windows. A single

smart hacker would be able to take down this entire country if they
succeed.

File formats should be open, just like the design of a car interface
--- the steering wheel/accelerator layout, etc. -- is open.
Competitors should not be smothered using heavy handedness. (This is
EXACTLY what catalyzed the suit that ended up in Sherman!) The
open-source community, in particular, should be allowed to thrive, not
squelched. Manufacturers should be able to install any OS that they
can sell, without fear of retaliation. That kind of force is the very
antithesis of the free and open market.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Bradley
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